

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5334

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
State Government, February 8, 2017

Title: An act relating to extending the time period for voter registration to no later than eleven days before the day of a primary, special election, or general election.

Brief Description: Concerning voter registration.

Sponsors: Senators Zeiger, Lias, Walsh, Kuderer, Keiser and Wellman; by request of Secretary of State.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government: 2/01/17, 2/08/17 [DP, w/oRec].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Moves the deadline to register to vote by any method to 11 days before an election.
- Moves the deadline to update an existing voter registration to 28 days before an election, then to 11 days before an election once the voter registration database allows transfers of registrations between counties.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Miloscia, Chair; Zeiger, Vice Chair; Hunt, Ranking Minority Member; Kuderer.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Pearson.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: Voter Registration Deadlines. To register to vote, a person must submit an application via mail or an online registration no later than 29 days before the day of the next primary, special, or general election, or in-person at their county auditor's office no later than 8 days before the election.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

A person may update voter registration at least 29 days before an election for the change to be effective for that election. A voter who does not transfer the voter's residential information by that deadline may still vote, but will vote in races affecting the voter's previous address.

Statewide Voter Registration Database. The Secretary of State maintains a statewide voter registration database that is the official list of registered voters for all elections. The database includes voter information received on registration forms.

Summary of Bill: Voter registration deadlines are modified. To register to vote in an upcoming election, a person must submit an application via mail, electronically, or at any location where voter registration applications are accepted no later than 11 days before the election.

A person must update their voter registration at least 28 days before an election for the change to be effective for that election. Once the voter registration database provides for the transfer of a voter's registration from one county to another, the deadline for updating voter registrations is moved to 11 days before an election.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This simple bill will make our election system more accessible. Changing the deadlines will effectively serve voters. The 11-day deadline will still provide ample security for the voter registration process. Automation has made it so we don't need the current deadline. The three most popular methods of voter registration are online, at the Department of Licensing, and by mail. The bill provides more time to register by all those methods. An amendment should be considered to allow counties to use same-day voter registration if they choose.

OTHER: Young voters have the lowest rate of participation, and this will allow for longer voter registration drives on college campuses. There is concern about the potential for confusion with the modification to the deadline to update an existing voter registration.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Hans Zeiger, Prime Sponsor; James Paribello, WinWin Network; David Elliott, Office of the Secretary of State.

OTHER: Nora Selander, Associated Students of Western Washington University.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.